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he saw the limitations of these people. In the Sisters of Charity he had a body of trained workers on which he could rely.

Some of the most interesting chapters in Mr. Sanders's book are those in which he gives us glimpses of other forms of philanthropy in that day which had no connection with the church. Renaudot, the friend of the poor, stands out as the type of the social reformer with which we are familiar. Renaudot's Bureau was both in its ideal and method an anticipation of our Charity Organization Societies. The Bureau did not actually dispense charity, but formed a means of communication between the charitably disposed and those who needed specific help.

At the present time, when so many ministers and churches are perplexed over the multiplicity of modern demands, there is help in the experience of the past. St. Vincent de Paul is an example of the way in which the most fervent piety manifests itself in practical philanthropy.

SAMUEL McC. CROTHERS.

CAMBRIDGE.

MYSTICISM AND MODERN LIFE. JOHN WRIGHT BUCKHAM, D.D. The Abingdon Press. 1915. Pp. 256. \$1.00.

MYSTICISM AND THE CREED. W. F. COBB, D.D. Macmillan & Co. 1914. Pp. xxi, 559. 10s. 6d.

The wide diversity of opinion and attitude which is included in the present "revival" of mysticism is well shown in these two books. The first is a careful and in many respects successful effort to apply the special methods and discoveries of the mystics to the spiritual needs of modern men. The second presents mysticism—or, more accurately, gnostic symbolism—as offering a relief from the difficulties of dogmatic theology.

It need hardly be said that the point of view represented by Dr. Buckham is more in harmony with the principles of traditional Christian mysticism than that which is so ably defended by Dr. Cobb; though here too the wide sweep of the author's net includes many things which the great contemplatives would hardly have looked upon as branches of their "Science of Love," while omitting others which they would certainly have considered to be essential to it. In Dr. Buckham's book amongst much that is admirable we find traces of that defective conception which mars nearly all modern writings upon mysticism, with the exception of Baron von Hügel's great and noble work—the conception which regards man as the first term and God as the second term, and which studies the

mystical process with a view to the profit which man's soul can get from it, in the way of illumination, peace, strength, holiness.

This glaring error of current spirituality, seen at its worst in the "New Thought" and "Higher Health" movements, is no new thing in mysticism. It has arisen at intervals in the history of Christianity, and whenever it has arisen it has been popular. It was described and condemned in the fourteenth century by the great mystic Ruysbroeck as "commercial spirituality," and is of course the exact opposite of that "perfect self-abandonment," seeking nothing in return, which is the real secret of the saints. I do not suggest that Dr. Buckham approves this heresy in the crude form in which it appears in Christian Science or "joy philosophy." Yet his endorsement of the advice to "avail ourselves of the Infinite" as "rational, logical, and *thoroughly worth while*" (p. 65) goes a long way in that direction. The emphasis in his pages lies rather on self-fulfilment than on self-surrender. He represents mystical experience as (a) something which we can get for ourselves, and (b) something from which we reap moral, spiritual, perhaps even physical advantage. Now as regards the voluntarist character of mystic apprehension, though the large amount we can do for ourselves in developing the spiritual consciousness should certainly be realized, yet no account of the unfolding of that consciousness can be complete which ignores the part played by that strange "power other than ourselves" which is technically called "grace." The mystical process is best understood when regarded as a "give and take" between our free will and love and God's free will and love. The self-long ethical and religious training does not ensure the Divine communication but merely makes it possible; as its attitude of still receptivity in contemplation—which must not be confused with the mere limpness of quietism—is but the preparation of an experience which it cannot of itself either induce or control.

As regards the "advantages" of mysticism, the swift illuminations and renewals of the spirit which it often brings, these are the accidents, not the substance, of the spiritual life. They more often fall to the lot of beginners than those who are advanced in the way. Dr. Buckham says (p. 92), "Without the freshness and zest which they give to life, existence might grow ashen and dreary—a meaningless leer, or a tragic shadow-play." Yet nothing is more certain than the fact that the greatest of the mystics were deprived, sometimes for years together, of these heavenly glimpses; that for them existence did grow ashen and dreary, and that they regarded this as a normal and healthful episode of the spiritual life, an opportunity for perfect

renunciation. Those who sought the "vision splendid" for its own sake they described as "spiritual gluttons," who mistook, as the Sufis would say, the Wayside Tavern for the goal of the quest. For them, in fact, the Mystic Way was something far more austere and costing than the gracious religious idealism of which Dr. Buckham writes. Where they were Christians, their life was centred on the cross; their joyousness and serenity were tested in bitter sufferings, sufferings which they welcomed with an eagerness which seems morbid to our modern world. If, however, that modern world is to enter into the heritage of the mystics in any real sense, it must accept the hard side with the soft; and its teachers must be persuaded to offer it, not the sponge cakes and jam of spirituality but the "strong food of the men of God."

Though on this side *Mysticism and Modern Life* may seem defective, yet on the other hand it contains chapters for which the reader can feel nothing but sympathy and gratitude. Especially admirable is the way in which the strictly normal character of the mystical life is insisted upon; the stages of the Mystic Way being shown as permanent factors in all religious growth, which must progress from purification of character through interior enlightenment to that harmony with Reality which corresponds with the contemplative's Unitive Way. Thus the mystic becomes, not a holy freak, but a man among men, developing in accordance with laws operative over the whole race; and his special experiences are seen as intense forms of a spiritual apprehension possessed in a rudimentary degree by countless ordinary people, and probably potentially present in us all. Since Dr. Buckham is specially concerned with the extent to which mystical apprehension can enter into the experience of the ordinary man, there is here little discussion of its higher and rarer forms. He dwells almost entirely upon that enhanced consciousness of the spiritual which the mystics themselves call the Way of Illumination—the direct intuitive Vision of Reality, "above reason but not without reason," possessed by so many poets and artists as well as by the contemplative saints. Perhaps the most interesting section of his book, from the point of view of the student, is that in which he deals with the nature of this mystical intuition, and vindicates its strictly rational character. Emotionalists on the one hand and intellectualists on the other will here find much that they can ponder to advantage.

Finally, the summary of the qualities which distinguish a sane and valid Christian mysticism, and the defects to which it is most inclined, is a useful corrective to much loose writing on this subject.

Mysticism is only normal, says Dr. Buckham most justly, when it is (1) empirical rather than speculative, (2) active in service, (3) moderate and reverent in expression, (4) free from all taint of occultism, (5) theistic, not pantheistic, (6) Christocentric. Its special failings are (1) an uncontrolled individualism, resulting in a certain contempt for institutions, (2) extravagance in doctrine, in asceticism, and in emotional expression, (3) a tendency to minimize evil, (4) a lack of historical sense. We may add that these errors are seen most often in the "heretical" mystics, who have cast off the restraint of authority and are left without any standard by which to check their own vagrant intuitions. The best and sanest mystical lives have ever been those which were lived within the boundaries of religious institutions, accepting the deep human need of a social and corporate as well as an individual life.

Hermann's notorious and unfair definition of mysticism as "piety which feels that which is historical in the positive religion to be burdensome and so rejects it," receives considerable support from Dr. Cobb's learned and elaborate work. The gist of his argument, in his own words, is this: that "in the interpretation of the Creed, we ought to proceed on the ground of the priority, *both in time and in value*, of the mystical element over the historical" (p. 31). That is to say, the articles of the Creed may or may not be true in fact; in any event, this is a secondary consideration. What really matters is their symbolic meaning, the way in which they express eternal truths of the spirit. The obvious danger of this sort of interpretation is that there is no formula in the world which cannot be made to yield a symbolic sense. Every religion in turn has taken refuge in allegory when striving to preserve doctrines of which the historical truth has been called into question. Nor need the process end with religion; a mind addicted to symbolism could extract spiritual nourishment from the Admiralty Time-tables. That Dr. Cobb should find allegorical meanings in every article of the Creed, and be able to point to others who have enjoyed similar good hunting in the past, is therefore not surprising; though probably the makers of these creeds would read some of his results with astonishment.

He brings to his task much learning and enthusiasm, and a profound belief in the eternal and life-giving power of the revelation of Christ. Yet his book, suggestive though it is in many respects, leaves on the mind that feeling of bewilderment which comes from long wrestling with the Pistis Sophia, or the tiresome enigmas of the Spiritual Alchemists. Here everything means something else, and sometimes several things at once. The one word "buried," for

instance, is persuaded to yield three separate theological meanings. In places the symbols seem rather mixed, as in the strange statement (p. 152) that "Eve must become Mary, and her Son the St. George bruising the serpent's head."

Dr. Cobb's Christology is peculiar. Apparently a firm believer in reincarnation—a doctrine to which he makes frequent reference—he regards the human personality of Christ as the perfected result of many previous incarnations (p. 264). His work as a whole represents the survival or renaissance of that gnostic element which was present almost from the beginning in Christianity, has even left its mark on the New Testament itself, and has been the inspiration of countless heresies. Though we cannot deny the primitive character of this Christian gnosticism, or the extent to which poetry and symbolism entered into the composition of the earliest Christian literature, this does not mean, as Dr. Cobb would like to persuade us, that these things represent the true tradition, the faith delivered to the saints. On the contrary, it was surely a right instinct which urged the Catholic Church to resist the encroachments of the gnostic element, and insist—as the creed-makers certainly did insist—on the primal value of historical fact as the basis of Christian belief. There will probably always be persons to whom the ingenious speculations of Christian gnosticism are attractive; who can more easily believe in the Incarnation when it is described as a descent through the aeons, and find an agreeable spaciousness in the statement (p. 153) that "the Heavenly Mother, the Divine Wisdom, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the *Ewig-weibliche*, are synonymous." To these "cunning clerks," as the old mystics would have called them, Dr. Cobb's ably written book will appeal; but it is doubtful whether the religion they will learn from it will be either specifically Christian or specifically mystical, in the sense in which the great Christian mystics have understood both terms. We miss here that special atmosphere, that clarity and fragrance of the Gospel, accessible to the simplest as well as the most learned souls, which made the mystic Suso acclaim Christ as a "sweet wild flower." It is no exchange for this to be assured (p. 143) that "at Christmas the sun, who is, as it were, being born again, may be said to be born of Virgo, who is then in the East"; or (p. 115) that "the whole universe as the cosmic Son of God is focussed in the historical Jesus Christ." These are not the things which the man hungry for God either needs or desires to be told. "By love He may be gotten and holden; by thought never."

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